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SIPDIS

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PHUM](#) [PREF](#) [SU](#) [VT](#)

SUBJECT: VATICAN TO DISPATCH AID CHIEF TO DARFUR

SENSITIVE

Ref: SecState 145183; Vatican 788; Vatican 594; Vatican 239

SUMMARY

1. (SBU) Holy See Country Director for Sudan Monsignor Lucio Sembrano told us July 8 that the Pope was sending the President of the Vatican's aid coordination agency to Darfur to assess the situation on the ground. Sembrano praised U.S. leadership on Sudan and took on ref (a) points with interest. He said that with international attention to Darfur already high, there were no current plans for the Pope to speak publicly on it. The Holy See will focus its attention on Darfur and other African issues at a gathering of Papal Nuncios to African states this September. End Summary.

SECRETARY, ANNAN VISITS SPUR POPE

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2. (SBU) Holy See Country Director for Sudan Lucio Sembrano said July 8 that the visits of Secretary Powell and Secretary-General Annan to Darfur had spurred the Pope to dispatch his aid chief to the region. Archbishop Paul Cordes, President of the Vatican's aid coordination agency, Cor Unum, is currently deciding on a date to travel to Darfur to assess the situation on the ground. Though Cordes' role is to coordinate Catholic aid in the region, Cor Unum sources told us he will bring with him a small gift of cash assistance from the Pope as well. Cor Unum has been working with the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) on the crisis for some time (ref. b).

VATICAN SUPPORTIVE; NO PLANS NOW FOR POPE TO SPEAK

3. (SBU) Sembrano took on reftel points with interest and praised U.S. leadership on Sudan. He said that with international attention to Darfur already high, there were no current plans for the Pope to speak publicly on it. He did note that soft-spoken Papal Nuncio (Ambassador) to Sudan Archbishop Dominique Mamberti was continuing to work "behind the scenes" on various aspects of the crisis. Though heartened by the increased attention to Darfur, Sembrano said it was hard to be optimistic given the Khartoum government's history of duplicity. He concluded that he hoped that it would be harder for Khartoum to "play games" with humanitarian aid and militias now that the world was watching closely.

NUNCIO CONFERENCE

4. (SBU) The Holy See will focus its attention on Darfur and other African issues at a Vatican conference this September. Papal Nuncios to African states will meet at the Vatican to discuss regional issues and brief Holy See Foreign Ministry officials on concerns at their posts. The last such meeting occurred some five years ago.

NICHOLSON

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